

March 07, 2016

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT**

A Public Safety Committee meeting was held on Monday, March 07, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Meeting Room, Benton County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central Avenue, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Committee Members Present: JPs Jones, Allen, Adams, Anglin, Leadabrand, Moehring  
Absent: JP Shadlow

Others Present: JP Sandlin, County Judge Bob Clinard, Assessor Linda Hambrick, Circuit Judge Tom Smith, Juvenile Detention Center Director Denyse Collins

Public Safety Committee chair JP Jones called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **Public Comments**

None

### **Endeavor Foundation Grant to Create a Shelter for At-Risk Juveniles**

Circuit Judge Tom Smith spoke about Benton County's need for a shelter to house at-risk juveniles. He stated that they try to find alternatives to locking up juveniles that should not be locked up; it is important to change a life early to keep them from going into the adult system. He said that young people who get locked up, who should not be locked up, have a tendency to become criminals later in life which is the opposite of what they are trying to accomplish. He stated that he made contact with the Endeavor Foundation about a year ago. He said that they are willing to explore going through their process to see if he can get the money to do a revamp of the existing Juvenile Detention Center to make part of it into a shelter. This way there would be no cost to the citizens of Benton County for the remodel. He feels it is important, as an elected official, to save money whenever possible. He stated that the JDC was built with 34 beds. Part of this design includes a pod for Families in Need of Services (FINS) cases. It is for status offenders; it is not looked on favorably to lock up status offenders and they try not to lock them up. The JDC's minimum budget is designed to house 22 kids at a time. Eight of those 22 are intended to be FINS kids. The rate of crime for juveniles has stayed consistent in Benton County; it has not increased with the population. If this part of the construction is approved, it looks like the expansion can be done for \$250,000. When completed, the shelter will have 8 beds, along with the detention center. The trick is to build it to where it can be converted back to

a 34-bed detention facility, if need be. The cost up front for the construction is zero. The only cost that could come up for two-employees down the road. He wants to work with the state board to make it such that, if they keep their numbers at 22, they can use the existing employees they have now. He stated that some bureaucratic details will need to be worked out with the state as this will be the first dual facility in the nation. He stated that he would love to see the JDC be fully utilized. He then presented statistics about the Juvenile Detention Center from the dashboard, as well as the Endeavor Foundation Grant application that will be submitted. He stated that he is currently contracted with Youth Bridge in Centerton. He has 4.2 beds based on his state contract. That stays full but the problem is that he has to put different types of risk levels there because he has no other options. Family domestic disputes that require a cool-off period are common and, if he had a shelter, he would not have to lock up the children involved in these situations. If this can be done, not only is it a unique and new idea, it will be used as a pattern for more jurisdictions nationwide.

A short discussion was held about the cost, who pays for it, the logistics of the conversion, and how the shelter would run in conjunction with the existing detention center.

County Judge Bob Clinard explained that, when they say they are doing it “in house,” it means that it would be managed in house. They would not be doing the actual work in house; they have budgeted for licensed professional sub-contractors to do the work. The JDC is currently in 3 pods with a central communication and guard center in the middle. Once one pod is converted to a shelter, there will be absolutely no intermingling of the shelter kids with those in the other two detention pods. The shelter pod will have a separate entrance from the parking lot as well as a separate exit. He reviewed the specific conversion design plans with the JPs from the dashboard. He said that the budget is less than \$200,000 for the conversion.

JP Adams asked how they will feed the kids in the shelter.

Juvenile Detention Center Director Denyse Collins said that there is a resident kitchen in the back of the JDC. Each pod has day room tables where the residents eat meals and snacks. She stated that they do not prepare meals daily since they do not have a full kitchen. The food is brought into the pod with a meal cart and served to the residents in the pods; the residents do not leave the pods.

A short discussion was held about what is included in the budget.

Judge Clinard stated that he does not know what the cost would be if the pod needed to be turned back into a detention pod in the future.

Denyse Collins said it can be used just like it is; the security of the pod will not be compromised.

A short discussion was held concerning the meals served in the JDC.

JP Leadabrand made a motion to forward a resolution request showing support for this project to the March 08, 2016 Committee of the Whole agenda, seconded by JP Adams.

JP Allen asked if any county resources will be spent on the project.

Judge Clinard stated that all of it is within his budget.

JP Allen stated that this issue will eventually need to go back to the Finance Committee.

JP Jones added that, when the grant comes back, it will need to be approved through the normal Finance Committee process.

Judge Smith said that all he needs right now to proceed is a resolution from the Quorum Court in support of the project. He can then work out the details with the state and the Endeavor Foundation. He stated that he is going to lower the amount from \$350,000 to \$250,000. His goal is for this project not to cost the county anything for the construction.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

JP Jones declared the meeting adjourned at 7:08 p.m.